

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-4 are pending in this application.

By this Amendment, claims 1, 3 and 4 are amended. The claims are amended to merely clarify the subject matter therein. Thus, no new matter is added by this Amendment.

**I. Information Disclosure Statement**

The Office Action includes the executed form PTO-1449 that was previously submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on January 12, 2004. Although the Examiner has initialed the reference cited therein, the Abstract and English-language machine translation have been struck out. Applicants assume the striking out of the Abstract and machine translation was made in error. As a courtesy to the Examiner, Applicants herein attach a copy of the form PTO-1449 from the January 12, 2004 IDS. Applicants request the Examiner to initial the reference cited therein and return the executed form to Applicants.

**II. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §112**

Claims 3 and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, the Office Action asserts that: (1) it is unclear whether the recited step counts time or disassembly operations; and (2) the recitation "the time for disassembling operation" lacks antecedent basis. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants amend each of claims 3 and 4 to replace the counting step with "an operation time measuring step for measuring time for disassembling operation of each component which constitutes an item to be recycled." Claim 1 is also similarly amended.

Applicants further amend claims 3 and 4 to provide antecedent basis where required.

Applicants submit that this rejection has been overcome and thus respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

**III. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §101**

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 because claim 4 is directed to non-statutory subject matter. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants herein amend claim 4 as suggested by the Examiner in the Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of this rejection.

**IV. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)**

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,586,022 (Arimoto). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Arimoto teaches estimating difficult operations merely by adding time required for performing operations that are set based on an evaluator's imagination or experience.

On the other hand, claims 1, 3 and 4 recite measuring the time for disassembling operation of each component which constitutes the item to be recycled. Accordingly, the claimed invention extracts difficult operations by referring to actual operation time that is measured through actual operations. Arimoto fails to teach or suggest this feature, or the benefits associated therewith. That is, in the claimed invention, extraction (i.e., estimate) of difficult operations are more accurate than that taught by Arimoto because the estimation is based on actual data.

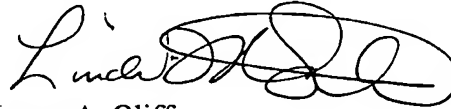
For the foregoing reason, claims 1, 3 and 4, as well as claim 2 dependent therefrom, are not rendered obvious by Arimoto. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are thus respectfully requested.

**V. Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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